



**THE
ENTERPRISE
CENTER**

Contact:
Kirsten Yates | 423-443-5718
kyates@chattanooga.gov

Chattanooga's EMPACT program addresses resident and workforce needs, celebrates graduations

Chattanooga, Tenn. (June 2, 2022) — Last week, Je'Vaughn Fleming's son graduated from kindergarten — and on June 6 the hardworking mom will celebrate her own graduation, too.

Fleming will graduate from the [EMPACT Program](#), a new and growing workforce development program focused on eliminating barriers to access and paving a pathway to a wide range of IT-related jobs. EMPACT provides workforce training that meets the real-world needs of Chattanooga residents while also filling a large need among employers.

The program, a partnership between City of Chattanooga's Office of Family Empowerment, Chattanooga State Community College, and The Enterprise Center's Tech Goes Home program, is graduating its second cohort of students on Monday, June 6, at The Bessie Smith Cultural Center.

"For me, graduating from this Google IT certification class means, first and foremost, a safe work environment coming from being an in-home caregiver," Fleming explained. "That's very important for my son and me. It also means more financial stability in a field that's ever-growing. Lastly, it gives me so many career options, and I can decide for myself how far up the ladder I want to go and create generational wealth for my family."

One of the program's keys to success is how it addresses the systemic barriers that often stand between students and graduation. The program helps ensure students can complete training by solving transportation issues, meeting childcare needs, and offering stipends to supplement income while learning. It also provides devices, home wifi access, and training.

"The EMPACT program is indeed a life changing opportunity for the students. Not only do they receive their certification for Google IT, they receive a myriad of soft skills," said Charlotte Brand, economic mobility program coordinator for the Department of Community Development. "They are not just learning skills that will change their lives, they are learning skills that will change the lives of generations to come."

In general, the average completion rate for online certification courses for the public is about 15 percent or less, according to a Columbia University Teachers College study focused on open online certificate programs. But by addressing the underlying reasons participants don't

complete courses like Google IT Certification on their own, EMPACT's graduation rate has reached 90 percent.

"I am so proud of these graduates. They have worked hard to learn skills in a short time that will change their lives," said Chattanooga State President Dr. Rebecca Ashford. "I am truly grateful for the partnership that made this opportunity a reality."

"Although the ongoing pandemic has limited the city's ability to scale the pilot program as quickly as originally planned, the success rate of EMPACT's participants speaks for itself," said The Enterprise Center President & CEO Deb Socia. "And, growing the program to meet the needs of more Chattanooga residents is a priority for all partners involved."

"As Chattanooga positions itself as Gig City, it's important to recognize all of those who have been left out of the equation, and work to meet their needs so they can benefit from the many resources our city has to offer," Socia said. "We're proud of this partnership pilot program and the significant impact it has on the lives of its participants. We look forward to growing this work with the City of Chattanooga and Chatt State to offer opportunities that benefit both our regional economy and the individual needs of residents who have historically been left behind."

You can learn more about the EMPACT Program [here](#).

To sign up for a future cohort or to find out if you qualify, call program coordinator Charolette Brand at 423-643-6452 or email cybrand@chattanooga.gov.

###